

Despite Stated Need to be Close to Cases in Newburgh, City is Not Currently in Consideration for Relocation of Bureau's Hudson Valley Resident Agency

Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) this week wrote a letter to Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Robert Muller asking that locations in the City of Newburgh be considered as potential sites for the Bureau's Hudson Valley field office. Last year the FBI indicated it had outgrown its current facility in Goshen and would be moving the Hudson Valley Resident Agency closer to the City of Newburgh, where the agency has done a tremendous amount of work in the past several years. However, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), which manages office space decisions for the federal government, recently released a plan that excludes the city from the "delineated area" within which new office space will be located.

"Placing an FBI field office in Newburgh would be an important symbolic step," said Hinchey. "It would send a clear signal directly to those preying on Newburgh's most vulnerable citizens that they are not welcome in this city. The Bureau has also indicated that proximity to where crimes occur is an important factor in preventing future crimes. It makes sense that they should want to relocate to the City of Newburgh, but they're not even considering locations in the city. I hope that Director Mueller will take a closer look at this situation and instruct the FBI to consider locations in Newburgh."

During a recent meeting that Hinchey held with Janice Fedarczyk, Assistant Director in charge of FBI's New York City Field Office, the agency highlighted its consideration of congressional district boundaries in developing where to look for new space, noting that the delineated area would keep the office within the 19th Congressional District. Hinchey has argued that political factors should not be considered and highlighted that the congressional districts in New York will be redrawn and very likely changed next year.

"A decision about the location of an FBI office should be based on where crime occurs and where the FBI's presence can make the greatest positive impact, not where congressional district boundaries lie," said Hinchey. "I was surprised to learn that the FBI was basing its decision in part on political considerations. Newburgh and Orange County have both petitioned the FBI to relocate to the city because they know the presence of the FBI office will have a positive impact, and the City has even offered the FBI the use of several of its properties."

In October 2010, Hinchey requested that the GSA relocate the FBI's Hudson Valley Resident Agency office from Goshen to the City of Newburgh. Hinchey cited the high incidence of drug and violent gang crime in Newburgh, stressing the need to locate critical federal crime fighting resources in a community that is struggling to combat high rates of violent crime and gang activity.

The full text of Hinchey's letter to Mueller requesting a revision in the draft "delineated area" to include Newburgh follows.

February 28, 2011

The Honorable Robert S. Mueller III, Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
U.S. Department of Justice
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20535

Dear Director Mueller:

I write regarding the FBI's decision to pursue a new facility for the New York Field Office's Hudson Valley Resident Agency (HVRA) due to a current lack of space.

I strongly support the relocation of the HVRA offices from Goshen to the City of Newburgh. Locating the FBI's office in Newburgh would be invaluable in combating the high incidence of drug and gang violence in New York's most dangerous city. The violence in Newburgh is so pronounced that it has drawn statements of concern from both President Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder. In an October 15, 2010 letter, your Assistant Director for Facilities and Logistics wrote, "Due to the number of cases in the Newburgh area, the FBI intends to relocate closer to Newburgh, where many of our resources are currently focused."

Unfortunately, I have learned that despite the FBI's stated interest in its new office's proximity to Newburgh and the highways nearby, the City of Newburgh has not been included in a draft "delineated area" that the General Services Administration will use to conduct a market survey for potential sites. My office has been told that the "delineated area" was the result of a multifaceted evaluation; however, the FBI has not provided the evaluation or adequately explained why locations within the City of Newburgh are explicitly excluded from consideration. Furthermore, in the October 15, 2010 letter, the FBI stated its consideration of Congressional District boundaries in developing the "delineated area," which raises a serious red flag as to why political boundaries are relevant to this process.

The final site of the new HVRA facility will undoubtedly take into account many factors, including mission, operational and physical safety concerns. However, if the FBI is truly committed to addressing Newburgh's exceedingly high crime rate, as it demonstrated in last May's sting, it will include the City of Newburgh in the "delineated area." I strongly urge the FBI to relocate the HVRA offices to City of Newburgh and respectfully request a revision in the draft "delineated area." I look forward to working with you on this matter.

Sincerely,

Maurice D. Hinchey